

NEWS RELEASE

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**Coast Guard Transfers Ownership of
Muskegon South Pierhead and South Breakwater Lights**

Michigan State Housing Development Authority executive director Keith Molin and State Historic Preservation Officer Brian Conway announced that the US General Services Administration transferred the ownership of four lighthouses from the U.S. Coast Guard to local stewards on Thursday. **Muskegon's South Pierhead Light** and **South Breakwater Light** were among the four.

"The transfer of these lighthouses out of federal ownership to local stewards will assist in long-term preservation of these lights," stated Molin. "The nonprofits and municipalities associated with these important structures have demonstrated the commitment and the wherewithal necessary to preserve these vital pieces of Michigan's maritime history."

During the 1990s, changing technologies, shifting priorities and fiscal constraints caused the Coast Guard to intensify its efforts to dispose of lighthouses throughout the country. In 1998, faced with the impending disposal of numerous Michigan lights, the State Historic Preservation Office formed the Michigan Lighthouse Project, a consortium of government stakeholders, to help facilitate the transfer of lighthouses out of federal ownership and into the hands of local governments or nonprofits who would preserve and maintain the structures.

The South Breakwater Light was built in 1899, and the South Pierhead Light dates from 1903. Both marked the entrance into Muskegon Lake from Lake Michigan. The Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy now owns the structures and plans to stabilize and preserve them.

"Many of Michigan's lighthouses would have been lost if not for the hard work and dedication of the many friend organizations like the Michigan Lighthouse Conservancy that has

taken over stewardship of these unique structures,” stated Conway. “These organizations have done a phenomenal job of preserving lighthouses for all of us. Lighthouses are an integral part of Michigan’s landscape and attract numerous visitors each year.”

The transfer ceremony took place as part of the Great Lakes Lighthouse Conference in Traverse City on Thursday, June 17. The conference was hosted by the Michigan Lighthouse Alliance. In addition to the Muskegon lighthouses, the DeTour Reef Light near Lake Huron’s Drummond Island, and the Harbor Beach Light were transferred. All four of the lighthouses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

You can support the preservation of Michigan’s lighthouses by purchasing a “Save Our Lights” license plate through the Secretary of State. Proceeds from the sale of these plates support the Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Fund.

The State Historic Preservation Office is part of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority. The Michigan State Housing Development Authority is dedicated to building a thriving and vibrant future for Michigan. MSHDA provides tools and resources to improve people’s lives through programs across the state. These programs assist with housing, build strong neighborhoods, and help create places where people want to live and work. MSHDA’s programs work in four areas: affordable rental housing; supporting homeownership; ending homelessness; and creating vibrant cities and neighborhoods. For further information on this or other MSHDA programs, go to www.michigan.gov/mshda.*

*MSHDA’s loan and operating expenses are financed through the sale of tax-exempt and taxable bonds as well as notes to private investors, not from state tax revenues. Proceeds are loaned at below-market interest rates to developers of rental housing, and help fund mortgages and home improvement loans. MSHDA also administers several federal housing programs.

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